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Question1: The Country of Origin labeling would allow consumers to choose whose products to purchase, and hopefully, most would choose American grown/produced products, which would help to support our local agriculture. We need to protect our local farmers and agriculture so that we do NOT become dependent on other countries. I realize products can be grown and produced much cheaper in other countries, but I believe most people would be willing, if necessary, to pay a little more for "American Made" products.

Question2: The higher land prices here are mainly caused from landowners, mostly farmers trying to get out of debt, selling farmland to developers, at a premium price, for shopping malls, subdivisions, etc. This causes the value of all surrounding lands to increase, therefore, increasing the property taxes on the remaining 'farms' putting an additional burden on our local farmers/landowners. A young farmer, or old farmer, for that matter, can not compete in the purchasing of farm land for agricultural purposes with these developers. I know we can't stop 'progress', but we can't afford to turn all of our family farms into strip malls either. I'm not sure what can be done to remedy this situation, but maybe the 'intended use' of the land could be considered, whether agricultural or developed, when tax evaluations are done.

Question3: As comments from last night's forum have indicated, the DCP program payments have caused some farmers/producers to lose cash-rented land. This is because the landowner can receive more money from DCP than from renting the land. These landowners are not farming/producing crops, the land is being left idle. This is where I feel the counter-cyclical payments, payments based on the average market price of a commodity, should not be made. What effect do commodity prices have on someone who is not marketing a commodity? I realize a landowner has the right to do with their land as they please, but this seems extremely unfair to the 'true farmer'. Why would USDA pay program crop subsidies to someone who is not producing crops? There are many sides to this issue, I know. From the landowners viewpoint, the DCP payments help pay the property taxes, and may prevent them from having to sell the farm. From the farmers viewpoint, the landowner would not have the DCP crop bases to receive a payment on if the farmer had not been 'farming' the land during previous years.

As to the programs leading to increased production and lower market prices, the program does allow the farmer flexibility in choosing the crops and acres of such crops he/she wishes to plant. This can lead to overproduction and therefore, lower market prices, as most producers will plant the crop(s) they feel will bring them the highest yield and most money on the market. Around here, cotton has been the crop of choice, resulting in more planted acreage and production of cotton. With the excess commodity on the market, the price will drop. But that's where USDA steps in with counter-cyclical payments and loan deficiency

payments. Question is, does USDA want/need to go back to controlling the crops and acres a farmer can plant, or leave the decision in the hands of the farmer?

Question4: Allow FSA, NRCS and Forestry Commission to work together as partners, as in the past. Let FSA handle the administrative end (paperwork, payments, etc.) and NRCS and Forestry handle the technical aspects, as we were all trained to do. The paperwork involved in conservation programs, such as EQIP, is tremendous. This leaves little time for NRCS technicians to actually go out on the farms to assess the conservation needs and develop a conservation plan. In the past, FSA personnel completed the necessary paperwork and maintained the files. This arrangement worked well for all agency personnel and, most importantly, for the farmer/rancher. The producer could complete all necessary paperwork at the FSA Office. At the local FSA Offices, personnel are always available. Unlike the local NRCS Offices, where there is normally one person, the conservation technician, on staff. The NRCS technician can not remain in the office at all times, he/she must be out on the farms. This causes a hardship on the farmer/rancher who may often have to make another trip to the Service Center in order to file an application with NRCS.

Don't play tug of war in Washinton with programs between sister agencies of USDA. The main objective of all programs is to help the American Farmer. Create policy, using teamwork between the agencies, that doesn't create undue hardship on the people we are trying to help.

Question5:

Question6: